

Background to the French Revolution

From the Financial Crisis to the
Tennis Court Oath

Those who make peaceful
revolution impossible make
violent revolution inevitable.

King Louis XVI

- ✦ Not really interested in making decisions
- ✦ Absolute Monarch
- ✦ Married to Austrian princess Marie Antoinette



Financial Woes

- ✦ 1/2 money went to pay interest on debt
- ✦ 1/4 went to pay for the army & navy
- ✦ Country and Royal Court operated on other 1/4



Charles Alexandre - Vicomte de Calonne

- ✦ Controller-General of Finances
- ✦ Because of the debts of the French Government he came up with a tax plan that involved taxing nobles and the rich.

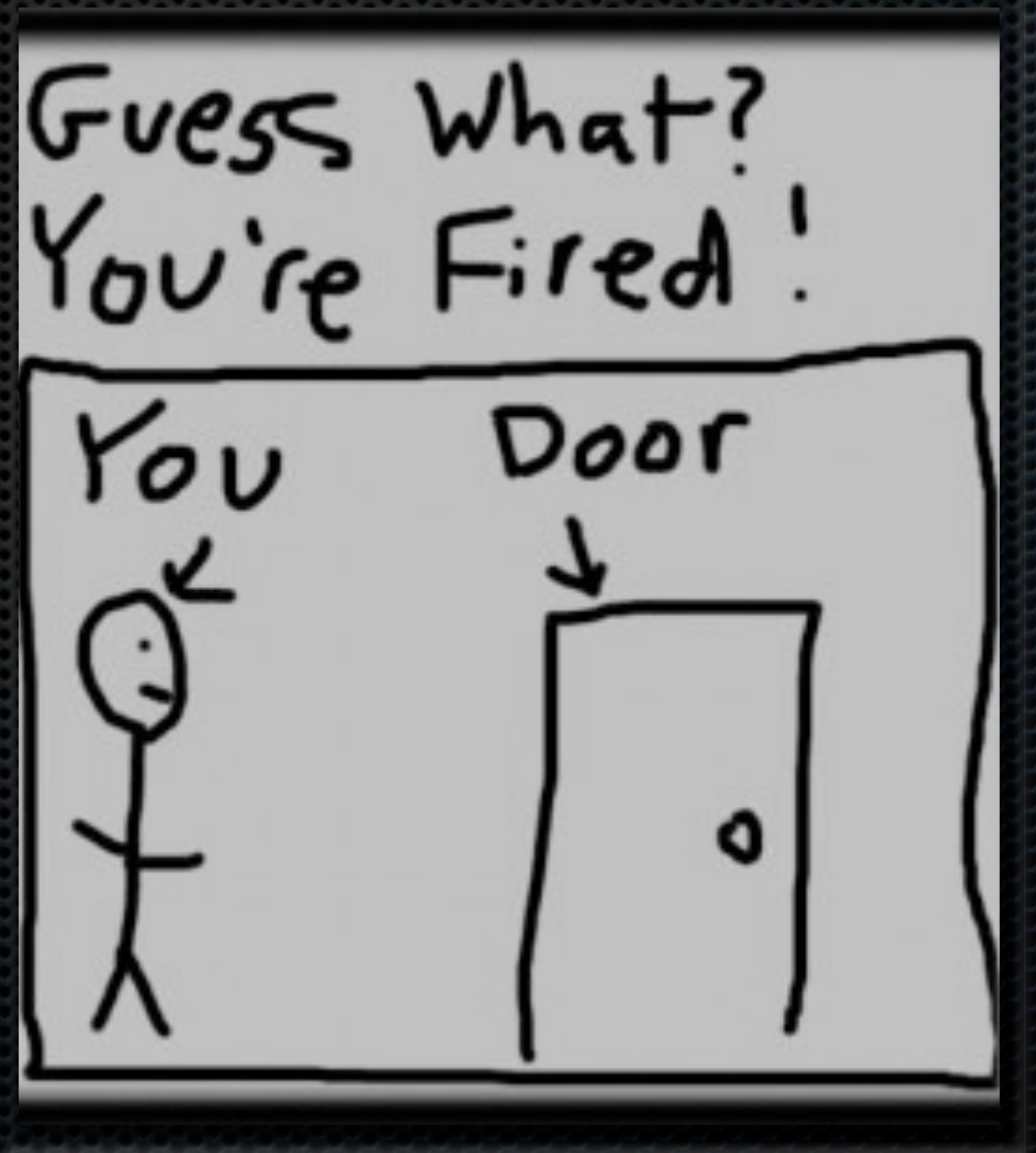


Calonne's Proposed Reforms

- ✦ Cut government spending
- ✦ Increase trade
- ✦ Sell Church property
- ✦ Reduce taxes on the poor
- ✦ Direct tax on all land owners

King dismisses Calonne

- Nobles insist that Calonne be fired as Controller-General



Jacques Necker

- ✦ Calonne's replacement
- ✦ Looked at books and reached the same conclusion as Calonne
- ✦ Proposed similar plan to the King



Nobles had similar reaction

- ✦ When taxes were proposed, they said that only the Parliament of Paris had the authority to impose new taxes - not a government minister



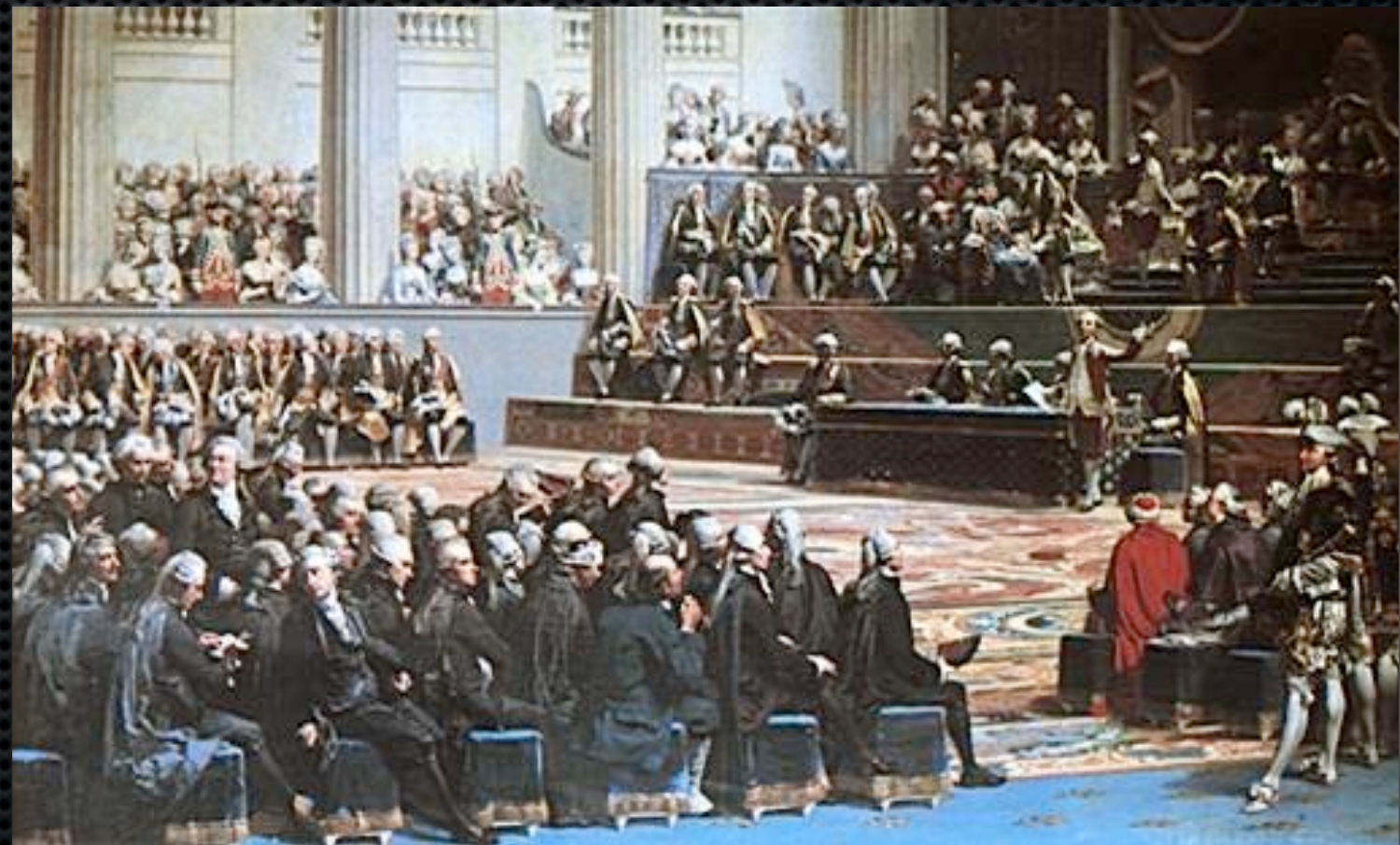
Parliament of Paris

- ✦ Said the King could not impose new taxes without the approval of the Estates-General
- ✦ Louis had members of the Parliament of Paris arrested.



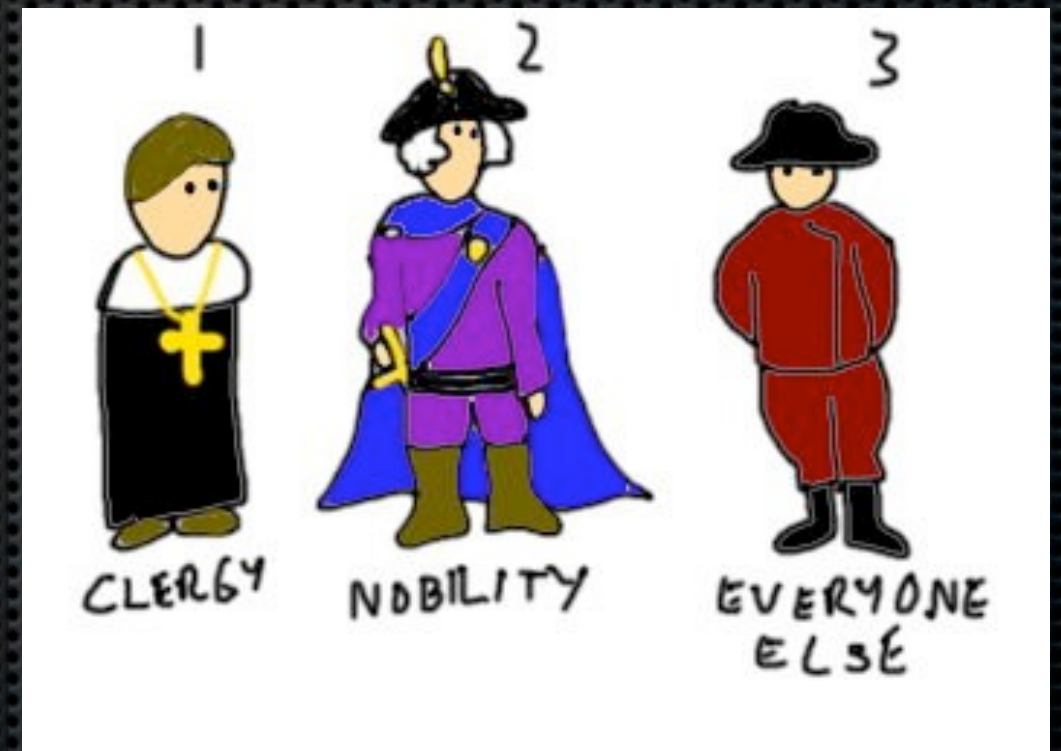
Louis called the Estates-General to meet

- ✦ Meeting to convene in May 1789
- ✦ First meeting of group in 175 years



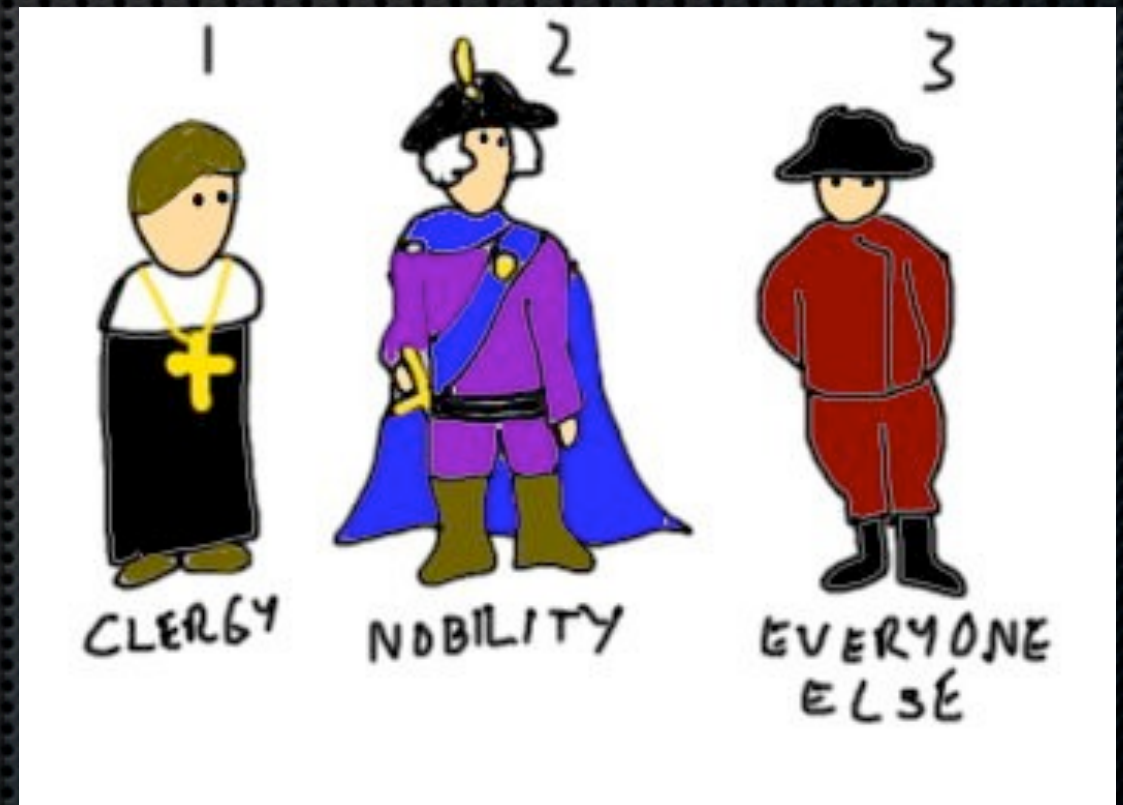
3 Votes or 1200 Votes

- ✦ 1st estate = 300 delegates
- ✦ 2nd estate = 300 delegates
- ✦ 3rd estate = 600 delegates



3 votes or 1200 votes

- ✦ May 1789
- ✦ Dispute about voting procedures
- ✦ Third Estate refused to meet until it was resolved



May turns into June...

- ✦ Still not meeting
- ✦ Demands from all sides



Mobs began to form outside the palace at Versailles

- ✦ Demanding action



Louis ordered doors to palace locked

- ✦ Third Estate left out in the rain
- ✦ Ran through the palace grounds until an unlocked door leading to an indoor tennis court





The Tennis Court Oath
Jacques-Louis David

The Oath

- ✦ Promise not to disband until they give France a Constitution;
- ✦ Declare themselves to be the National Assembly of France

Louis not ready to live under a Constitution

- ✦ Calls in army
- ✦ Soldiers not entirely loyal
- ✦ Some poor clergy and liberal nobles side with the 3rd Estate
- ✦ King is unsure what to do next

Rumours & Fear

- ✦ Mercenaries
- ✦ Guns
- ✦ the Mob
- ✦ Bastille Prison



Bastille Day

14 July 1789